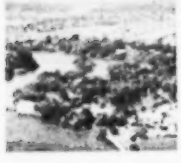

SHINE AMONG THE BEST

The Government's Vision and Action Priorities

SUMMARY

Québec

Québec

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The Premier's message

We have formed the first government elected by Quebecers in the 21st century. We prepared ourselves to take the helm of Québec with the intent of ushering in a new era of development and prosperity. The essence of our mission is thus to build a bridge between two eras: the birth of modern Québec and the advent of a Québec that can **shine among the best** in the age of globalization.

A **Québec** of **7 million ambitions**

This Québec government action program presents the orientations we will act on so that Québec can gather strength, face down its challenges with confidence and serenity and continue its drive toward success.

A creative force

In many ways, the development of Québec in North America is an epic feat. Few societies without the advantage of great numbers can lay claim to as many achievements as Québec. Our economy is one of the most modern in the world. Québec is a leader in a number of highly promising areas such as telecommunications, aerospace, optics and photonics, biochemistry, the pharmaceutical industry and many fields of medical research. We are equally at home harnessing raging rivers as reinventing the age-old art of the circus. Québec is a creative force.

Québec has come of age, and it has done so on its own terms, remaining true to its values. Our public healthcare system bears witness to our commitment to social justice. Our public education system embodies our belief in equality of opportunity. Our social safety net reflects the compassion that unites us. Quebecers have reason to be proud of what we have accomplished.

Two challenges

Québec's successes are such that it would be easy to rest on our laurels without making any changes to how we do things. That would be a mistake. Because in the shadows of our achievements, two major challenges beckon: demographic changes and putting our financial house in order.

Québec must prepare itself to face an increasing demand for public services, particularly in healthcare, that will coincide with a reduction in the work force.

Yet we are confronting these fundamental changes with public finances that are of great concern. The increase in the cost of public services is greater than the growth of State revenues. It would be against our interest to dig more deeply into the hard-earned income of Quebecers who are, as we all know, the most heavily taxed citizens on the continent.

Caught between growing needs and limited means, Québec has seen its capacity to provide care, to educate, to come to the relief of those at risk and to develop its infrastructures dwindle. Quebecers have been witness to increasingly long waiting time and a deterioration of public services.

This action program is thus also intended to be a portrait of today's Québec. It sets the stage for Quebecers to be fully involved in determining the choices that we will all make together. Specifically, dialogue will begin in spring 2004 with forums organized around four themes: health and social services; education, training and employment; regional and sustainable economic development; family and social development. These forums, which will culminate in a Québec-wide meeting, will put the great issues that face Québec into the specific context of challenging public finances and demographic changes.

A State duty

If we do not review our ways of doing things, the gap between the will of the State and the State's ability to act will continue to widen. The time has come to undertake a thorough renewal of how the Québec State functions.

We will be sorting through the State's commitments in order to privilege essential missions like health, education and assistance to those who are neediest. We will delegate those things that others can do better or more cost-effectively than the State.

We will decentralize public administration by giving greater responsibility to the citizens of the regions, who ask nothing more than to take their future into their own hands with the State acting as a supportive resource rather than a legislator of centralized solutions.

We will mobilize our economy by freeing it from restrictions that stand in the way of investment and job creation. We will take advantage of new technologies and new sound management methods to more efficiently deliver the services the State is responsible for. We will give ourselves back a Québec that is able to provide care, to educate and to support its most disadvantaged citizens.

I can understand that the advent of these changes may be a source of insecurity for some. But to deny that they are needed would be to deliberately blindfold ourselves, which is even more dangerous. We are motivated by the desire to see Québec proudly claim our place in this new century and our share in the promise it holds.

Questioning the past is not irreverent—it is part of the State's duty. But questioning requires boldness, and achieving change takes courage. In this, we take our inspiration from Quebecers who, throughout our history, have been able to energetically affirm our culture and our language and carry our voice and our spirit to the highest heights.

It is for our children's future and out of respect for our parents—for all those who built Québec—that we have committed ourselves enthusiastically and with pride to the grand mission of renewing how our society functions.

The only Québec I can imagine is a great Québec. That is able to shine among the best and realize the 7 million ambitions that form it. That is the Québec we will build with all Quebecers.

The Premier of Québec,

Jean Charest

The Government is now making public the action program we will be implementing during our mandate.

This program presents the Government's vision and priorities. It introduces the work we have already begun and explains the orientations that will frame our actions for the next four years.

Over the next few months, for each of the areas involved, we will be issuing action plans that detail how the program will be deployed. Starting with the next budget, a fiscal framework will specify the funding needed to carry it out.

The forums organized during the spring of 2004 and the Québec-wide meeting that will wrap them up will enable Quebecers to participate fully in achieving it. As a result, they will directly influence the Government's future initiatives.

Values we share

The Government's action is based on a number of **fundamental values**: primacy of individual freedoms, confidence in citizen responsibility, spirit of enterprise, commitment to social justice, conviction of the need for sustainable economic development, attachment to democratic values and affirmation of Québec's identify.

A vision of the Québec we want

We have a very clear vision of the Québec we want to build—a Québec where **well-being is a reality in its citizens' daily lives**.

Québec will provide quality healthcare and social services, accessible everywhere. Education will be resolutely oriented toward success. On the economic level, Québec will have made significant gains and the citizens of the regions will have their economic development firmly in hand. Québec will embody solidarity, assist its families and support its youth. Québec will be strong within the Canadian federation and enjoy a modern and efficient administration.

Two inescapable issues

We are undertaking the implementation of our Government's action priorities while, in the background, two inescapable issues shape all initiatives to come.

In the short term, Québec faces a veritable **budget trap** from which we must free ourselves if we want to have the leeway we need for our development.

In the medium term, **demographic changes** confront the whole of our society, which must respond with appropriate answers.

Getting out of the budget trap

As early as April 2003, the population of Québec was informed of the extremely difficult financial situation it was facing as identified by the committee of experts headed by Guy Breton. The difficulties we inherited have even greater impact in that they involve a position that is structurally fragile.

In budget terms, Québec is indeed confronted with a substantial problem that can be summarized in five statements.

- **We spend more on public services than the other provinces in Canada**, even though collectively we are less well off. In 2002-2003, Québec spent $715 more per person on public services than the other provinces, while our wealth per capita (per capita GDP) was $4,960 less.
- **The gap has widened during the last few years**, because expenses rose more rapidly in Québec than elsewhere in Canada.
- If we look into the future, we foresee that **the costs of continuing current programs will increase more rapidly than the State's income**. In other words, needs will grow more rapidly than the financial resources we have to meet them.
- **Over the past few years**, and in spite of attaining a zero deficit, **the public debt has grown steadily**. It increased by 13.8 billion dollars over the last six fiscal years.
- In the future, to close the gap between income and expenses, the Québec State **can neither increase taxes further nor ignore the debt problem**. The fiscal burden on individuals is already one of the heaviest in North America. At March 31, 2003, Québec's debt represented slightly more than 44% of gross domestic product, which is the highest level in Canada.

  To make things worse, the fiscal imbalance that disadvantages the provinces has still not been resolved. The distribution of wealth within Canada does not correspond to the division of responsibilities between the two orders of government. In particular, the federal contribution for healthcare remains greatly inferior, in relative terms, to what it was in the mid-nineties.

Regaining our financial leeway

It is clear that such a situation cannot go on indefinitely. If we wish to protect our collective choices and carry out the priorities citizens want, we must act quickly to free Québec from the current budget trap. With regard to public finances, maintaining the status quo would be the worst solution.

To regain the operating room that does not exist at this time, the Government intends to take action in three directions simultaneously.

- **Québec must create more wealth** by promoting economic growth.

  Québec benefits from only 16% of private investment in Canada (private non-residential investment)[1], while we represent 24% of the Canadian population. Year after year, in relation to the Canadian standard, this means more than five billion dollars in job creating investments that do not take place in Québec. Québec must catch up.

  One of the ways to achieve this will be to lower taxes. Lightening the tax burden is one of the levers for strengthening the incentive to work and encouraging investment. Reducing taxes will therefore create more wealth and, consequently, provide the State with a durable source of the income it needs to increase its financial leeway.

- **We must succeed in making our State more efficient**. Protecting our collective choices thus also involves a thorough review of the State's role and a modernization of both our programs and our ways of doing things.

  The Québec State must be more focussed on services and contain fewer structures. The Government is currently undertaking a systematic analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of programs. Improvements that are identified will be implemented throughout our mandate.

  In keeping with our action priorities, the Government also intends to consolidate healthcare sector financing, to reorient education around the student, to define a new approach that will ensure the renewal of infrastructures and to review the methods for acting on the economy.

- The federal government must provide a satisfactory and durable answer to the problem of **fiscal imbalance**. The provinces must have additional financial means to meet the needs that they are to fulfil, particularly in the areas of healthcare and social services. In the short run, the provincial premiers have consequently unanimously requested that the federal government raise its contribution to healthcare and social services expenditures to 25%.

  The Government of Québec is determined to play a leadership role in discussions between the provinces and the federal government. Establishing the Secretariat for Information and Cooperation on Fiscal Imbalance is an illustration of the will of the Government and of its initial effects.

[1] Private and public investment in Canada, revised outlook, July 2003.

Responding to demographic changes

Québec society is experiencing **major demographic changes** that will significantly shape our future. In spite of the increased contribution from immigration, we are already seeing a slowdown in population growth.

In the much shorter term, demographic changes are manifesting in the accelerated ageing of the population.

These changes confront each citizen as well as the whole of our society.

- They will have an impact on the economy and the job market. Consequently, we are expecting a reduction in the working-age labour force as of 2011. According to some forecasts, by 2030 Québec will have only two working-age persons per person aged sixty-five and over; the current ratio is five working-age persons per person aged sixty-five and over. This means that we anticipate a near-term labour shortfall in many fields and in certain professions, as well as a loss of expertise due to the retirement of a large number of older workers.
- Over the next few years, the Government will be faced with an increased demand for public services for the elderly.
- The resource regions have already been affected by a marked decline in population.

Demographic changes thus raise a great many issues to which we must respond.

Yet population decline is not fatal: the situation forecast would be substantially modified if Québec were to have a more advantageous balance of immigration and higher natality.

Demographic developments based on the strong growth scenario established by the Institut de la statistique du Québec in February 2004 would, in fact, extend the period of population growth beyond 2051. By 2026, Québec would have at least 500,000 more inhabitants.

The hypotheses underlying this scenario are in no way utopian and can actually become the reality if we so desire. Faced with the issues at hand, the time appears to have come to institute a population policy that includes the various initiatives aimed at increasing immigration, encouraging immigrants to settle in the regions and acting appropriately on the different factors that shape the decision to have children.

The challenge

Our Government has outlined an action program that is faithful to our chosen orientations—responding to demographic changes and resolutely attacking the public finance situation.

This is where the challenge lies: we must rehabilitate and stabilize the public finances while immediately implementing the strategic orientations that will allow us to build the Québec we want—a Québec that ensures the well-being of its citizens and the quality of service provided to them.

Québec must meet this challenge.

- The stategic orientations that will frame government action will be in place for a span of four years, which corresponds to the mandate the population has given us. This means that fulfilling the action priorities will be spread over several years.
- A number of the priorities chosen will not require any further injection of funds insofar as they involve different ways of providing services, legislative and regulatory changes, and improving how we manage the tools that we already have.
- For initiatives that require additional resources, our Government will first strive to make them self-financing by realigning budgets for taking direct action according to our priorities. The spending for Québec government programs is currently in excess of 45 billion dollars, which gives a good idea of the size of these budgets and the possibilities for action they represent.

Detailed implementation of the Government's action program will be spelled out over the next few months by each of the departments and government agencies involved. The forums organized for the spring of 2004 will allow Quebecers to participate in carrying it out and directly influence government initiatives.

Overall, as of the next budget, the Government will, as part of a global financial framework, detail the budget adjustment steps initiated and the conditions for financing our action priorities.

The orientations of our mandate

Our Government's action priorities revolve around seven strategic orientations that will form the framework for government initiatives.

1 Improving the **health** of the population and making social services and **quality** healthcare **accessible**.

2 Orienting **education** toward **success**.

3 Achieving Québec's **full economic potential** in a perspective of **sustainable development**.

4 Fostering **regional** autonomy and development.

5 Supporting the development of **families** and encouraging **natality** and **social development**.

6 Affirming **Québec's identity** and advancing our interests and **culture** in Canada and throughout the world..

7 Reviewing the **State**'s role and ways of doing things.

Health

As of the spring of 2003, the government had already freed up nearly 250 million dollars for healthcare. The funds were invested in decreasing waiting lists for surgery, relieving crowding in emergency rooms, in home support and residential services, and in supporting the most vulnerable—particularly elderly people with decreased autonomy.

Since that time, major initiatives have been undertaken to make Québec's healthcare and social services system more efficient and effective.

These initiatives all constitute the first phases of an action that will span our entire mandate. To improve healthcare and social services and make them more accessible, the Government wishes to **refocus healthcare and social services on the individual** rather than on structures. **Approaches will be reviewed** and the necessary **financial resources** mobilized.

- The Government first intends to **reduce waiting time, and relieve emergency room crowding**.
  - A four-pronged strategy for reducing waiting lists is in place: the strategy includes development of high-volume cataract and orthopaedic surgery centres, systematic monitoring of clienteles before, during and after hospitalization, consolidation of data and improvement of operating suite management, as well as rapid access to radio-oncology treatments.
  - To relieve crowding in emergency rooms, the government will intervene specifically where the situation is especially difficult—that is, in four Montréal and Montérégie establishments.
  - Support will also be given to the other hospital centres. Overall, revising various approaches will have a positive impact on emergency room use.
- The government intends to improve the services offered to some of our society's **most ill and vulnerable people**, particularly elderly people with decreased autonomy.

- Québec's health and social services system must become **more efficient** and **effective**.
  - Services to the public will henceforth be decompartmentalized so that patients no longer have to undergo multiple disruptions at each phase in the care they receive. We will be able to achieve this by implementing local service networks in every region of Québec.
  - Creating four university health networks will make it possible to coordinate planning for the different facets of the university mission: education, research, and evaluation of technologies.
  - Work organization will be improved, simplified and made more flexible by expanding the role of nurses and reducing the number of union certification units. By negotiating some working conditions locally, the specificities of each region and local circumstances can be taken into account, putting an end to the blanket approach privileged to date.
  - Medical and nursing staff will be increased in each region of Québec by increasing nursing admissions, increasing the number of students in medicine, and supporting foreign nurses and doctors who wish to move to Québec.
  - The Government will introduce a drug policy to ensure the sustainability of the Prescription Drug Insurance Plan. The policy will feature three primary focuses, i.e., the accessibility of drugs, keeping drug prices affordable, and optimal use of drugs.
- The Government is convinced that one of the keys to improving the healthcare system lies in **strengthening accountability and transparency**. We will therefore create the post of Health and Welfare Commissioner and set up tools for communicating with the citizens.
- Several departments will be mobilized toward the effort of increasing **prevention** and improving **public health**. In particular, future generations must acquire sound habits starting at a young age.
- The Government will continue **to reinvest in health**, but in an **effective manner**. This implies a new way of allocating resources and facilities in keeping with priorities, effective use of private-sector partners and, starting immediately, clear identification of where available resources will be focused. We must also thoroughly examine how healthcare is financed in Québec.

Education

As the Government promised, the importance given to education was reflected in the budget decisions we made in the spring of 2003. The funds dedicated to education were, in fact, increased by 400 million dollars, in spite of the Government's restricted manoeuvring room.

The mandate will be dedicated **to strengthening our educational system**, which is essential to our young people's success. In effect, education and training represent one overriding means for ensuring that the largest possible number of young people achieves success in life—education and training also constitute responses to the demands created by competition and market openness.

- To counteract academic failure and drop-out, the Government will provide better support for students and additional support to parents. Operational and practical tools will gradually be implemented such as homework assistance, mentoring, and early identification.
- By the end of our mandate, students at the elementary level will be at school an additional one and a half hours per week. At the start of the 2005 school year, all high schools will apply the new curriculum designed to support students' progress toward success.
- The opportunities for moving between the high school, college and university settings will be multiplied and made easier.
- Mastery of French and a solid knowledge of a second or even third language are strategic factors in success. New measures will be implemented to facilitate the learning of French as a first language. The English as a Second Language program will be incorporated into the first cycle at the elementary level.
- The Government will keep students and their parents informed of the opportunities provided by professional and technical training. Technical training will be further geared toward regional specificities and better coordinated with the university level.
- The forum on the future of college teaching organized in 2004 will help evaluate the place of colleges in Québec's education system.
- A parliamentary commission will focus on the quality, accessibility and long-term financing of universities in order to identify specific solutions. These solutions will comply with the Government's commitment to freezing tuition fees throughout its mandate.

The economy

In spite of undeniable achievements, Québec has fallen behind neighbouring provinces and States. In particular, we are suffering from the current gap in the area of private investment.

Only an economy that is freed from its restrictions and is more productive and more competitive will allow us to **realize our potential**.

The Government has already begun to take action at several levels to improve our economy's performance. These actions will go forward and be deployed throughout our mandate.

- The Government will **lower taxes** and **simplify taxation**. By the end of its mandate, the Government will have brought the tax burden on individuals down to the level of the Canadian average, and brought it closer to the North American average. Therefore, the Government will reduce personal income taxes, targeting the middle class and families with children. In terms of business taxation, our priority will be on reducing capital taxes.

  Current taxation reduces the incentive to work and constitutes a barrier to investment. It must cease to be a handicap in the contest we are waging to draw and retain the most competent entrepreneurs and workers.

- **Growth in private investment** is critical if we want to exploit our full potential and create jobs.
  - The Government will renew the strategies for prospecting for foreign investments. Assistance levels will be established based on the investment's concrete contribution to the attainment of economic objectives.
  - Strategies will be launched to stimulate entrepreneurship, support SMEs and foster use of available private venture capital.
  - The Government wishes to improve the business climate by easing the regulatory burden.
  - Financing of transport and telecommunications infrastructures will be better ensured by entering into agreements with the federal government and municipalities and through partnerships between the public and private sectors.
- The Government is beginning to relaunch **energy development**.
  - By the end of the next decade, Hydro-Québec plans to increase hydroelectric production by more than 10%. In all, Hydro-Québec's strategic plan anticipates triggering 19 billion dollars in investment during the 2004-2008 period. Hydro-Québec is aiming for investments of 3.5 billion dollars per year until 2020. The expansion of hydroelectric development will guarantee Quebecers' energy security.
  - The Government will encourage projects aimed at increasing electricity production via cogeneration facilities, wind energy, and biomass energy. We also remain convinced that efforts to use energy better must, now more than ever, be pursued.

- Québec may well have large oil and gas reserves if the potential of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Gaspé Peninsula prove to be recoverable. Hydro-Québec has been mandated to verify the potential of both the Gulf and Gaspé in association with the private sector.
- These various projects must be carried out in a context of respect for local communities, particularly native communities, and in compliance with environmental protection regulations. The Government of Québec and the federal government are outlining a draft agreement on environmental assessment cooperation that will allow environmental assessments to be handled jointly.

- The development the Government wishes to achieve must, in effect, be **sustainable development**.
  - The Government will thus acquire a sustainable development strategy, which will constitute **Québec's Green Plan**. The Green Plan will be tabled in 2004 and must be in force during 2005.
  - The Government will include initiatives for better water use in the Green Plan.
  - The strategy for climate change will be made public in 2004.
  - During our mandate, the Government wishes to raise the proportion of territory categorized as protected area from 5% to 8%.
  - The commission charged with advising the Government on forest management will report in 2004.
  - Environmentally sound agriculture and pork production will also be the focus of measures during our mandate.
- In 2004, the Government will deploy a **manpower qualification** strategy and will revise the tools for job market intervention so as to improve the quality of work, increase the job market participation rate for those who are of working age, and encourage extension of the duration of working life for those who wish to remain at work.
- The role of **State corporations** whose mission is **to support economic development** will henceforth primarily consist in stimulating private investment that creates jobs.
- The Government wishes to bring the share of GDP dedicated to **research and development** to 3% by the end of our mandate. To achieve this, we will encourage the development of a culture of innovation and motivate businesses to dedicate more of their resources to the area that will be their future.

The regions

The Government is initiating a **profound change in the relationship between the State and the regions**, relying on the regions' will to take charge of their own development.

The effect of the reform undertaken by the Government will be to make the regions more prosperous. It will help improve the efficiency and quality of services to citizens since decisions will be made much more quickly, close to the public served, and within simplified structures. New responsibilities will be given to local and regional elected officials, who will be accountable to the public for their decisions. The Government wishes decentralization to occur at a pace that suits the regions' citizens and in accordance with their wishes.

An **initial step** has been taken toward decentralization by improving the rules for regional governance.

- In 2004, in a **second phase**, the Government's departments and agencies will identify and propose programs and activities for decentralization or devolution to the municipalities or RCMs.
- The **third phase** will focus on determining the programs and activities to be actually transferred. These programs and activities will be identified through a negotiation process involving the Government and each of the regional conferences of representatives.
- In tandem with the decentralization process, the Government will, as of 2004, propose a **strategy for creating wealth through natural resources** so as to develop these resources in partnership with the regions and native communities.
- To make the regions more prosperous, **local, regional and rural development** will be based on increased resource processing, benefiting more fully from comparative advantages, and exploitation of potential for development. The regional conferences of representatives will play a strategic role in implementing this development.
- With the collaboration of the regions involved, the Government will support a number of **activity sectors** whose vitality is crucial. These include the tourism industry, agriculture and the agri-food industry, the mining sector, the lumber sector, and the modernization of infrastructures.

The family and social development

The Government wants to build a Québec in which **families can thrive** and the community can guarantee **equal opportunity and social justice**.

The nature of Québec families has never been so diversified. Demographic changes are giving new urgency to the support to be provided to families with young children. The Government will gather the various initiatives implemented during our mandate into an overall **family policy**.

- In the context of easing taxation on individuals, the Government's priority will be **to reduce the tax burden on families**, with a specific focus on middle-class families with children.
- By March 2006, the Government intends to reach its target of 200,000 **daycare** places. The daycare offering will be further diversified. Financing will be ensured by revising the parental contribution in force since January 1, 2004: note that a daycare space costs an average of $38 per day, per child, with Québec families contributing $7 to the total bill. In fact, government invests an average of $8,000 per year for each daycare space.
- The first components of a **policy on work-life balance** will be presented by the fall of 2004.
- The Government wishes to pick up discussions with the federal government on implementing **Québec's parental leave program** as soon as possible.

The Government's directions in the areas of health, social services and education represent key components in Québec's priorities for **social development**. But action is needed on other fronts.

- The Government's first **action plan to combat poverty and social exclusion** will be based on respect for the dignity of the individual, a better exercise of individual rights and responsibilities, and the need to provide everyone with equal opportunities in life.
- There will be investments in and additional support for **social housing**, with participation from all partners concerned.
- Integrating youth into work life will be sustained and supported with the implementation of a **youth strategy** designed to support young people in their progress toward success.
- Reforms will be made to the **judicial system** to make it more effective and accessible.
- The Government will strengthen **public safety** by acting on the correctional system, completing the reform of police organization, improving the response to risks and revising the law governing private security.

Québec's identity and culture

The Government is the foremost promoter of **Québec's identity**, **language** and **culture**. The Government's action program aims to ensure promotion of the French language, the expression of Québec culture, and support for the francophonie.

Such action will take place in a context of respect for English-speaking Quebecers, cultural communities and native peoples. Their participation and contribution are essential to developing a Québec that is open to the world and respectful of its minorities.

- The Government will strengthen measures fostering **the francization in the workplace** and **French-language learning** so as to speed up the integration of the various cultural communities into Québec society.
- **Support for culture** will focus specifically on improving artists' socio-economic circumstances.
- Québec will increase its participation in the **francophonie**, both in Canada and internationally.
- Specific efforts will be devoted to strengthening the ties binding the **different components of Québec society**. In particular, the Government will support native peoples to help them build strong communities that thrive to the fullest within the Québec identity.

The new climate in the relationships among the provinces and the federal government must enable Québec's interests to be successfully promoted. The Government wants Québec to once more lead the intergovernmental cooperation that is gradually emerging from better cooperation among the provinces.

- Implemented at Québec's initiative, the **Council of the Federation** will re-establish strong relationships in favour of the provinces, ensure respect for jurisdictions and once more imbue Canadian federalism with its true meaning.
- The Government is counting on the new spirit guiding federal-provincial relations to achieve satisfactory answers to the issue of the **fiscal imbalance**.
- We must also remedy the current deficiencies in the **equalization program** and drive negotiations forward on issues such as **financing for infrastructures** and **parental leave**.
- **At the international level**, the Government has already initiated a strong action intended to simultaneously promote our economic interests, reinforce bilateral ties with the United States and France, and protect cultural diversity.

The State

The Québec State has played a major role in our society's evolution and adaptation. However, it has not aged well, and has gradually moved away from its primary mission: to deliver quality services to Quebecers at a price in keeping with their ability to pay.

The Government's priority is to **refocus the State on its essential missions**—health, knowledge, prosperity, security and identity—in order to put it at the service of citizens.

- The Government has begun a **systematic review of the State's functioning** by examining both structures and programs and the ways in which services are delivered. The review will continue throughout our mandate.
- In the modernization exercise we are instituting, the Government sees **its employees and the unions** representing them as partners with a primary role to play in improving the services provided to Quebecers.
- In 2004, the Government will present a policy framework for **partnerships to be established between the public and private sectors**. The aim of the policy is to develop collaborations that are currently few and far between.
- By implementing **online government**, we will exploit the opportunities now offered by new information technologies to their fullest. It will be possible to achieve significant gains while serving citizens better.

Demographic changes are a critical challenge for Québec's collective future.

- The Government will set out an **integrated population policy** covering both natality and immigration.
- The Government will develop a strategy to respond to the Québec **economy's labour force needs** in a context of anticipated shortfalls.
- The Government will specifically analyze the major **structural effects of demographic changes on the economy**.
- Demographic concerns will be part of each **State modernization** undertaking.

Québec is one of the world's oldest democracies. We are proud of it, and rightly so. However, there are a number of gaps in Québec's political regime. A global **reform project of democratic institutions** will be presented during our mandate and tabled for public consultation.

Shine among the best

Through our action program, our Government is providing the public with a **complete and overall view** of the approach we are undertaking at the beginning of our mandate.

There is one **bridge that must be crossed**: Québec must be freed from the budget trap we are now caught in, and win back the financial leeway that is no longer available to us.

Québec must also address the current demographic trends and secure our future in the face of this issue by identifying the right ways to get there.

This vision cannot become a reality without everyone's collaboration, and the mobilization of every citizen concerned.

Therefore, during the spring of 2004, forums involving as many citizens as possible will be organized on health and social services; education, training and employment; regional and sustainable economic development; the family and social development. These forums will accompany the implementation of the chosen action priorities. They will thus be able to have a direct impact on some major phases of carrying out the action priorities such as upcoming budgets and the establishment of departmental operating appropriations.

By making our action program public, the Government intends to guarantee this mobilization and rely on the public's support and acceptance to do so.

The vision we have presented deserves to be matched by efforts to allow Québec **to shine among the best**.

The State's essential missions	Health	Knowledge
Values we share	Primacy of individual freedoms, accountability of individuals, and enhancement of the spirit of enterprise	Commitment to social justice, and equality of opportunity for men and women
The Government's strategic orientations	Improve the health of the population and make social services and quality healthcare accessible	Orient education toward success	Actualize Québec's full economic potential in a perspective of sustainable development
The Government's action priorities	• Reduce waiting time and relieve emergency room crowding • Support the sick and vulnerable • Reorganize to improve efficiency • Increase accountability and transparency • Enhance prevention and improve public health • Allocate financial resources based on new rules	• Support students' progress toward success • Improve knowledge of languages • Strengthen professional and technical training • Outline the future of college teaching • Ensure the quality, accessibility and long-term financing of universities • Increase education's role in the regions' economic, cultural and social development	• Lower taxes • Support private investment • Develop energy potential • Promote a clean environment and sustainable development • Strengthen work force qualification • Review the mandates of State corporations • Encourage knowledge and innovation

The Government's vision and action priorities

Prosperity

Promote economic development and sustainable development

Advance regional autonomy and development

- Achieve decentralization
- Ensure regional and rural development to make the regions more prosperous
- Encourage new Quebecers to settle in the regions
- Improve municipal democracy

Security

Attachment to democratic values

Support the development of families, encourage natality and social development

1 Implement change for the better for families

- Ease the tax burden on families
- Develop quality daycare services that are tailored to families' needs
- Facilitate the work-life balance

2 Social development

- Implement the action plan to combat poverty and social exclusion
- Create a propitious environment for youth participation
- Support investments in social housing
- Make justice more effective and accessible
- Improve citizen security

Identity

Affirmation of Québec's identity, promotion of an inclusive Québec culture, attachment to Canada and openness to the world

Affirm Québec's identity and advance our interests and culture in Canada and throughout the world

1 Québec's identity and the promotion of its culture

- Promote the French language, Québec culture and the francophonie, in Québec, Canada and throughout the world
- Build an inclusive Québec
- Support the development of native peoples
- Plan immigration and integrate newcomers

2 Promote Québec's interests in Canada and around the world

- Assume our leadership role
- Attack the fiscal imbalance and move other issues forward with the federal government
- Assert Québec's place on the international scene

Review the State's role and methods

- Modernize the State
- Implement government on line
- Implement a strategy for dealing with demographic challenges
- Reform democratic institutions

The State's essential missions	Health	Knowledge
Values we share	Primacy of individual freedoms, accountability of individuals, and enhancement of the spirit of enterprise	Commitment to social justice, and equality of opportunity for men and women
The Government's strategic orientations	Improve the health of the population and make social services and quality healthcare accessible	Orient education toward success
The Government's action priorities	• Reduce waiting time and relieve emergency room crowding • Support the sick and vulnerable • Reorganize to improve efficiency • Increase accountability and transparency • Enhance prevention and improve public health • Allocate financial resources based on needs	• Support students' progress toward success • Improve knowledge of languages • Strengthen professional and technical training • Outline the future of college teaching • Ensure the quality, accessibility and long-term financing of universities • Increase education's role in the regions' economic, cultural and social development

The Government's vision and action priorities

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Promote economic development and sustainable development

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